



## The Simple Heart Initiative

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February 19, 2024

Hon. Lewis A. Kaplan  
Daniel Patrick Moynihan  
United States Courthouse  
500 Pearl St.  
New York, NY 10007-1312

Dear Judge Kaplan,

My name is Wayne Hsiung. I am an attorney, former law professor, and political defendant who has been arrested numerous times for my nonviolent activism for animals. This is a bit of an odd letter, given my background as a fellow defendant. The primary difference, I suppose, is that while my criminal cases have brought me much acclaim, including an op-ed in *The New York Times*<sup>1</sup> and a podcast with Ezra Klein<sup>2</sup>, Sam's have brought him much shame.

That is wrong. Sam was and is a good person who cares deeply about those who are suffering. While he has made many mistakes in that pursuit, he was never motivated by greed or status. He was motivated by the desire to do good. I know this from personal experience because Sam supported a cause that brought him neither wealth nor social acclaim: animal rights.<sup>3</sup>

I met Sam around the year 2014. Back then, he was a student at MIT who had his choice of professions before him. And yet he spent an inordinate amount of time on... helping animals. He regularly engaged in deep discussions on how to reduce the suffering of animals, even with those he disagreed. He showed unusual interest in dissenting points of view and was willing to entertain perspectives from all sides; that is rare in the advocacy realm. But above all, Sam was focused on helping those in need. Those who had no ability to help themselves.

While the group in question, in the context of my conversations with Sam, was animals, this focus extended to the rest of his work. Sam was not concerned about pandemics or artificial intelligence because it was cool; he was ahead of the game, pushing hard to protect our community far before others saw either issue as mainstream.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/opinion/animal-rights-factory-farming.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vox.com/podcasts/2019/12/5/20995117/wayne-hsiung-animal-rights-the-ezra-klein-show>

<sup>3</sup> I should note that I never sought nor received any money from Sam.



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We need more people like Sam. And while the very attributes that made him special – his ability to look beyond the cultural currents of our time and try to find that path that seemed right to him – may have also contributed to the fall of FTX, we evaluate people by their intent, not just the outcomes they cause. And I continue to believe that Sam’s intent was good. His commitment to a cause ignored by so many – the suffering of animals – was evidence of that.

I hope you take this into account in your sentencing, and the fact that Sam still has so much to offer the world. I know from firsthand experience that that contribution will be severely limited if he is in jail. But he is still a young man. I could see Sam helping animal shelters and sanctuaries improve the efficiency of their fundraising; assisting advocacy campaigns using data to improve their ability to teach people about animal cruelty; and researching the most cost-effective ways to reduce cruelty to animals in factory farms. I can see these things in his future because Sam has already done many such things in the past.

Let’s not throw that life away. Not just for Sam, but for the many living beings who can still benefit immensely from his desire to do good.

Sincerely,

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